11:Faron E-5 (1952-1954)1961 SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche

plication of a Supreme Being, *ñenechen*. Religious activity as observed in funeral rights centers on a concern with authentic ancestral spirits, for the most part, and supplication of *ñenechen*. Fertility rites are directed mainly, except for the first day of the ceremony and occasionally thereafter, to mythical ancestors, regional gods, and *ñenechen*. Both ceremonies rest on lineage-based obligations, but both involve the attendance of nonrelated groups; the host group and the guests, taken together, comprise the ritual congregation. This congregation has a core membership which is more or less invariable year in and year out. A major concern of the congregation during any ritual assemblage is counteracting the forces of evil, collectively called *wekufe*, and the human embodiment of evil, the sorcerer-witch who is called *kalku*.

The persons who are most intimately concerned with restraining evil and who are most competent to perform on behalf of the living are the *ñillatufe* or ritual priest who represents the people in *ñillatun* ceremonies, the several *weupin* or orators who represent the patrilineages of the deceased and the surviving spouse or other relatives in the funeral service, and the *machi* or shaman who sometimes acts as a functionary during *ñillatun*, in the absence of a ritually competent *ñillatufe*, but whose main task is curing clients of supernaturally induced illness.

The *ñillatufe* and *weupin* have no special powers of their own and act only as ritually proficient intercessors for the assemblage. The shaman is powerful in her own right and is the single member of any community who is so continually preoccupied with the eternal struggle between the forces of good and evil. She stages a curing performance which is quite theatrical and admittedly calculated to impress her patient and observers with her powers. Her paraphernalia includes a drum (*kultrun*) and specially decorated stick, a gourd rattle or one of silver bells, and numerous special herbs. She blows smoke over the patient's body, makes water aspersions, sucks out intrusive objects from affected parts of the body, and so forth. She often becomes possessed by a familiar spirit which "speaks" in a special language through the *machi* to her helper (*thungulmachin*). *Machi* who are adept at ventriloquism are able to throw their "spirit" voices to all corners of the hut, creating an atmosphere of awesome mystery which grips the attention of those assembled. By definition, a *machi* enlists the forces of good to combat evil in behalf of the people. Nevertheless, the fact that she has personal contact with the forces of evil,

12: Faron E-4, 5 (1952-1954) 1964
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche

796 session follows the pattern set during the first. However, on the
796 second day, the regimen of the first day might be threatened by
625 drunkenness if the officials have not maintained proper supervision. The job of the officials, especially the sergeants, is to preserve order, and they may strike at people with their long poles of office if anyone violates their orders. To a great extent, it is felt that the smoothness with which the ceremony is conducted determines its success or failure, and the sergeants and captains may evict people with impunity in order to maintain the proper atmosphere for the traditional conduct of the affair.

796 After the initial prayer is offered in the special language
789 (archaic) to *ñenechen* and the ancestors, the *ñillatufe* signals for
[782] the performance of *awn*, which clears the ceremonial field of any
[769] lurking forces of evil. This act is so important to the successful
[198] conclusion of *ñillatun* that, even where there are few horses available, I have seen it performed by men riding stick horses. The altar is circled several times, ideally four times or a multiple of four. The more horsemen available, the more effective the maneuver. In addition to galloping around the sacred field, some of the riders may wear sheepskin masks or have their faces painted in order to frighten away the ghosts, meanwhile hiding their own identity from them.

[823] The front of the main altar, before which the head priest
[778] stands, faces east, a ritually propitious direction. It is around this altar and the secondary one (*llañi*), which is set up a hundred yards or so east of it, that the riders gallop. Starting from the right of the main altar, the horsemen ride counterclockwise in a number of complete circuits. Two of the riders carry standards, and the rest follow them in a column of twos, the rear being taken up by one of the sergeants who carries a long staff of office. The sergeant, who takes his cues from the captain or the priest, shouts commands to the riders. At regular intervals they raise a cry to chase away the evil spirits. All of this is a duplication of the *amulpellun* ceremony which takes place during funerals and is conducted for the same purpose. The riders are the center of attraction, as they race around the ceremonial field. They finally dismount near the *llañi*, where they tether their horses, to begin

12: Faron E-4, 5 (1952-1954) 1964
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche

she may be available, at least not the sort of invitation which entitles her to perform as a ritual specialist in the celebration. In all cases, therefore, even when the ritual skills of the *ñillatufe* are wanting, there is a head man called *ñillatufe*; the *machi's* activities are always supplementary to his.

If a *machi* is asked to officiate and to carry out most of the ritual procedure, the ceremony takes a shamanistic rather than a priestly turn. Titiev has described two *ñillatun* in which *machi* were the main functionaries, although chiefs were also present. I have nothing to add to Titiev's description in general, but I should like to comment on the performance of a shaman I saw in action at one of these ceremonies. In one instance, the shaman threw her voice with such success that a large part of the audience turned away from the *rewe*, where she performed, apparently expecting to see the spirit with which the *machi* was supposed to be communicating. A second occurrence which startled the crowd was the "stabbing" of the *machi* by her helper. The assistant made repeated thrusts with a knife, and finally appeared to drive it into the *machi's* breast. The blade, it was realized afterwards, merely got caught in her flowing shawl. But the dexterity with which the maneuver was accomplished left many of the spectators gasping with surprise. It was explained to me that the action was taken to drive out any evil spirits that might have attempted to enter the *machi* during her possession. It was a theatrical performance, of high quality by any standards, which distinguishes the shaman from the ritual priest.

My belief is that whatever prominence *machi* have attained in *ñillatun* ceremonies, it is in proportion to loss of ritual knowledge and the decline in the number of competent *ñillatufe* throughout Mapucheland. They have acquired importance in fertility rites by default. They are introduced into this stately ceremony to compensate for gaps in ritual knowledge; but they act as shamans, as grapplers with the supernatural forces, not as priests who deal in studied ritual. While both shaman and priest deal with spirits, the shaman manipulates her own familiars and is customarily possessed by them, and is also attacked by evil spirits. The priest is representative of a community before its ancestors, is not possessed, does not grapple with the forces of

12: Faron E-4, 5 (1952-1954) 1964
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche

rewe (a step-notched and carved pole outside her house, which she climbs during certain ceremonies), considered to contain power transmitted by *ñenechen* and the *machi's* familiars (*pillan*).

The *machi* must be able to undergo spirit possession and communicate through an interpreter (*thungulmachin*) who tells the *machi* the things she revealed while in a state of trance. For while possessed, the *machi* is unaware of what she says and does and often uses a secret language consisting of a set of sacred formulas. She sometimes handles hot coals and passes her arms through fire. It is said that *machi* used to place hot coals in their mouths and were able to walk barefoot over glowing embers. Also, they customarily blew tobacco smoke over their patients' bodies in the four cardinal directions, a tradition which some continue to observe.

The *machi* enters a state of trance, during which possession occurs if she is successful, only in order to cure the most serious illnesses. Whether there is possession or not, her rhythmic incantations and drum-beating always have some autohypnotic effect and lend a mysterious, otherworldly air to her performance. Using herbal remedies (*lawen*), massaging affected parts of the body, sucking those parts where invisible venomous darts have entered, and spraying water over the body are also important features of a curing ceremony (*machitun*). Most cures are first attempted by essentially medicinal means, overtly magical cures being resorted to when herbal concoctions appear to have no remedial effect. *Machi* agree that supernatural curing exhausts them and that it is dangerous to be possessed by their familiars, one's own soul (*am*) being placed in jeopardy during trance states. The danger is twofold: the returned familiar spirit may be captured by a *kalku* and turned against the *machi*, and the *machi's* loosed soul might be captured by a *kalku*, whereupon the *machi* herself could be forced to become a witch. A final consideration of whether a supernatural cure is attempted is the patient's ability to pay the high cost of the performance.

Nowadays, the vast majority of *machi* are females. Most of those I met seemed to be leading usual enough domestic lives, although they had married comparatively late in life. It was immediately apparent in some cases that these women domi-

12: Faron E-4, 5 (1952-1954) 1964
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche

a person dies people assume that they themselves are in grave supernatural danger, autopsy or not.

A simple method of divining the cause of death, and therefore the extent to which the survivors themselves are threatened, is to place a bowl of flour near the head of the corpse. If some of the flour is gone after the night passes, the person's spirit has eaten it, which indicates that the spirit is hungry and well and not in the hands of *kalku*. It is again a consoling notion, and much less expensive than the services of a specialist.

Machi claim that they are difficult to persuade to perform counter magic against a *kalku*. While such enterprise is entirely legitimate, it places the *machi* in the same general camp with the *kalku* and, if the people are at all suspicious of her, could ruin her reputation. People tend to confirm this claim, saying that *machi* no longer perform magic directly against sorcerers, at least not against professional sorcerers. *Machi*, therefore, content themselves and their clients with preventing death and curing illness by chasing away evil spirits, rather than by killing witches (i.e. causing their bodies to die) and releasing the captured spirits. At the death of a patient, then, a *machi* usually has no further service to offer.

Machi always operate in an atmosphere charged with danger, but they see a great difference between chasing away evil spirits sent by a *kalku* and killing the *kalku* herself. Although *machi* do not like to deal directly with *kalku*, they are not reluctant to discover them, which is much less dangerous. This is generally done in a ceremony called *kalkutun*.[1] The ceremony lasts a long

[1] I have never witnessed this ceremony, but I managed to persuade a *machi* friend to enact a modified version of it. The ceremony followed the basic pattern suggested in the vignettes above. In the darkened room, the (denied) ventriloquism was very effective. From time to time, the *machi* threw straw on the fire and, as corners of the room became lighted momentarily, threw her voice in that direction. My wife's supposed inability to produce offspring was the occasion for this ceremony. The diagnosis was *koftun*—emasculation of the husband by a woman who had borne him a child out of wedlock. The *machi* felt I knew who practiced *koftun* against me. We were told to sip from two bottles of medicine every morning and evening for the next month. After the stated period passed, my wife became pregnant. It should not be difficult to imagine the impact on the local people of this "international" power of the *machi*.